

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions and listings of claims in the application:

LISTING OF CLAIMS:

1.-14. (canceled).

15. (currently amended): ~~[[A]]An equol-containing composition comprising equol~~ which is obtained by ~~incubating~~causing a strain of a live microorganism capable of metabolizing daidzein to equol to act upon a daidzein-containing substance, wherein said at least one strain is selected from the group consisting of *Bacteroides* E-23-15, which has been deposited as FERM BP-6435, *Streptococcus* E-23-17, which has been deposited as FERM BP-6436, and *Streptococcus* A6G-225, which has been deposited as FERM BP-6437, with a daidzein-containing substance.

16.-17. (canceled).

18. (currently amended): The composition according to Claim 15, which further contains at least ~~en-one~~ component that favors the maintenance and growth of the strain.

19. (previously presented): The composition according to Claim 18, wherein the component that favors the maintenance and growth of the strain is at least one substance selected from the group consisting of galactosylsucrose, soybean-oligosaccharide, lactulose, lactitol and fructo-oligosaccharide.

20. (previously presented): The composition according to Claim 15, wherein said daidzein-containing substance further contains at least one member selected from the group consisting of genistein, daidzin and genistin.

21. (previously presented): The composition according to Claim 15, wherein the daidzein-containing substance is soya isoflavone.

22. (canceled).

23. (previously presented): The composition according to Claim 15, wherein said composition is a food composition.

24. (previously presented): The composition according to Claim 23, wherein the food composition is selected from the group consisting of a drink, dairy product, and fermented milk.

25. (previously presented): The composition according to Claim 15, which is in a pharmaceutical dosage form.

26. (previously presented): The composition according to Claim 25, wherein the pharmaceutical dosage form is selected from the group consisting of aqueous solutions, emulsions, granules, powders, capsules and tablets.

27.-32. (canceled).

33. (withdrawn-currently amended): A method for treating menopausal syndrome in a middle-aged to elderly woman, comprising administering to a middle-aged to elderly woman in need thereof[,] the composition of Claim 15.

34. (withdrawn-currently amended): A method for treating menopausal syndrome in a middle-aged to elderly woman, comprising administering to a middle-aged to elderly woman in need thereof[,] the composition of Claim 18.

35. (withdrawn-currently amended): A method for treating menopausal syndrome in a middle-aged to elderly woman, comprising administering to a middle-aged to elderly woman in need thereof[,] the composition of Claim 19.

36. (withdrawn-currently amended): A method for treating menopausal syndrome in a middle-aged to elderly woman, comprising administering to a middle-aged to elderly woman in need thereof[,] the composition of Claim 20.

37. (withdrawn-currently amended): A method for treating menopausal syndrome in a middle-aged to elderly woman, comprising administering to a middle-aged to elderly woman in need thereof[,] the composition of Claim 21.

38. (withdrawn-currently amended): A method for treating menopausal syndrome in a middle-aged to elderly woman, comprising administering to a middle-aged to elderly woman in need thereof[,] the composition of Claim 23.

39. (withdrawn-currently amended): A method for treating menopausal syndrome in a middle-aged to elderly woman, comprising administering to a middle-aged to elderly woman in need thereof[,], the composition of Claim 24.

40. (withdrawn-currently amended): A method for treating menopausal syndrome in a middle-aged to elderly woman, comprising administering to a middle-aged to elderly woman in need thereof[,], the composition of Claim 25.

41. (withdrawn-currently amended): A method for treating menopausal syndrome in a middle-aged to elderly woman, comprising administering to a middle-aged to elderly woman in need thereof[,], the composition of Claim 26.

42. (withdrawn-currently amended): A method for treating postmenopausal osteoporosis in a middle-aged to elderly woman, comprising administering to a middle-aged to elderly woman in need thereof[,], the composition of Claim 15.

43. (withdrawn-currently amended): A method for treating postmenopausal osteoporosis in a middle-aged to elderly woman, comprising administering to a middle-aged to elderly woman in need thereof[,], the composition of Claim 18.

44. (withdrawn-currently amended): A method for treating postmenopausal osteoporosis in a middle-aged to elderly woman, comprising administering to a middle-aged to elderly woman in need thereof[,], the composition of Claim 19.

45. (withdrawn-currently amended): A method for treating postmenopausal osteoporosis in a middle-aged to elderly woman, comprising administering to a middle-aged to elderly woman in need thereof[,], the composition of Claim 20.

46. (withdrawn-currently amended): A method for treating postmenopausal osteoporosis in a middle-aged to elderly woman, comprising administering to a middle-aged to elderly woman in need thereof[,], the composition of Claim 21.

47. (withdrawn-currently amended): A method for treating postmenopausal osteoporosis in a middle-aged to elderly woman, comprising administering to a middle-aged to elderly woman in need thereof[,], the composition of Claim 23.

48. (withdrawn-currently amended): A method for treating postmenopausal osteoporosis in a middle-aged to elderly woman, comprising administering to a middle-aged to elderly woman in need thereof[,] the composition of Claim 24.

49. (withdrawn-currently amended): A method for treating postmenopausal osteoporosis in a middle-aged to elderly woman, comprising administering to a middle-aged to elderly woman in need thereof[,] the composition of Claim 25.

50. (withdrawn-currently amended): A method for treating postmenopausal osteoporosis in a middle-aged to elderly woman, comprising administering to a middle-aged to elderly woman in need thereof[,] the composition of Claim 26.

51. (withdrawn-currently amended): A method for producing the composition of Claim 15, comprising ~~causing a strain of a live microorganism capable of metabolizing daidzein to equal to act upon a daidzein-containing substance, wherein said strain is incubating at least one strain~~ selected from the group consisting of *Bacteroides* E-23-15, which has been deposited as FERM BP-6435, *Streptococcus* E-23-17, which has been deposited as FERM BP-6436, and *Streptococcus* A6G-225, which has been deposited as FERM BP-6437, with a daidzein-containing substance.

52. (withdrawn): The method according to Claim 51, wherein the composition further contains at least one component that favors the maintenance and growth of the strain.

53. (withdrawn): The method according to Claim 52, wherein the component that favors the maintenance and growth of the strain is at least one substance selected from the group consisting of galactosylsucrose, soybean-oligosaccharide, lactulose, lactitol and fructo-oligosaccharide.

54. (withdrawn): The method according to Claim 51, wherein said daidzein-containing substance further contains at least one member selected from the group consisting of genistein, daidzin and genistin.

55. (withdrawn): The method according to Claim 51, wherein the daidzein-containing substance is soya isoflavone.

56. (withdrawn): The method according to Claim 51, wherein said composition is a food composition.

57. (withdrawn): The method according to Claim 56, wherein the food composition is selected from the group consisting of a drink, dairy product, and fermented milk.

58. (withdrawn): The method according to Claim 51, wherein the composition is in a pharmaceutical dosage form.

59. (withdrawn): The method according to Claim 58, wherein the pharmaceutical dosage form is selected from the group consisting of aqueous solutions, emulsions, granules, powders, capsules and tablets.